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ABSTRACT

The results of a statewide occupational student follow-up study initiated by the Illinois Community College Board are summarized. All 38 public community college districts tracked occupational/career students for a three-year period. A total of 27,663 first-time students enrolled in occupational/career programs in 1974 constituted the study group. Summary data are presented on the original intentions of the students for enrolling in the program; the enrollment patterns of the students; reasons for withdrawal; employment rates for former students; educational status of former students; methods students used to find their jobs; and median monthly salaries of former students. The follow-up results were also analyzed by specific occupational/career programs to provide a comparison among programs and to provide statewide norms for use by local institutions for comparative purposes within a given program. The results of this analysis for graduates of the programs are presented. The study results indicate that occupational/career programs in the public community colleges of Illinois are very effectively meeting the needs of a wide variety of students. (SW)

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SUMMARY OF THE ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE OCCUPATIONAL STUDENT FOLLOW-UP STUDY

by Ivan J. Lach

In 1974 the first Statewide Occupational Student Follow-Up Study was initiated by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). This study involved the participation of all 38 public community college districts in tracking their occupational/career students for a three-year period. A total of 27,663 first-time students enrolled in occupational/career programs during fall term 1974 constituted the group for the longitudinal study. Of this group of students 12,512 were enrolled on a full-time basis, while 15,151 were enrolled on a part-time basis. This group of students was evenly distributed by sex with 50.3% being female and 49.7% male.

The following objectives were developed for the Statewide Occupational Student Follow-Up Study when the study was initiated:

1. To identify the reasons that students have for taking course work in occupational areas in the community colleges;
2. To determine to what extent former occupational students achieved their objectives;
3. To determine the enrollment patterns of occupational students in the community colleges of Illinois;
4. To determine the job location of former community college occupational students;
5. To assist and encourage local institutions in developing occupational follow-up studies;
6. To assist the local institutions in obtaining data necessary for master planning in occupational program areas; and
7. To assist in providing necessary data for local occupational program advisory committees.

The results of the three year longitudinal statewide follow-up study of community college occupational/career students showed that:

1. Almost all of the former students, both graduates and non-graduates, obtained a job and were in the labor force;
2. Occupational/career education had a great impact on increasing the personal income of former students;
3. Former occupational/career students were very satisfied with their present job or career;
4. Two out of three former occupational/career students took a job within the community college district of their enrollment;
5. Most former students felt that the course work in the occupational/career programs were relevant and very helpful to various aspects of their present position; and
6. More than one out of four former occupational/career students were continuing their education.

One of the most unique features of this follow-up study was the identification of the original intent of the students for enrolling in an occupational/career program at the community college. An analysis of the data in Figure 1 shows that nearly one-half of the occupational/career students can complete their objectives without completing the program and many can achieve their objectives by taking only a few courses at the community college.

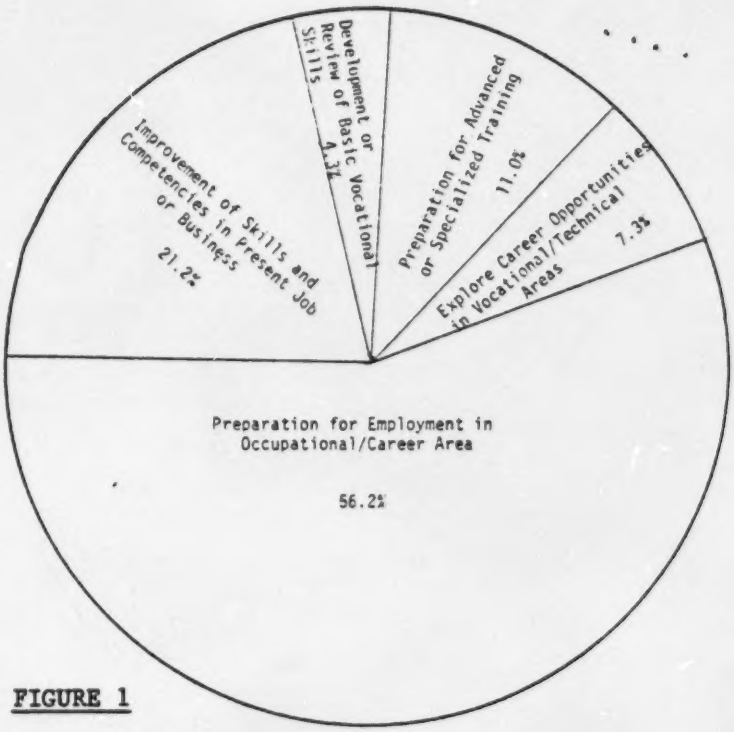
Development or Review of Basic Vocational Skills
4.3%
Preparation for Advanced or Specialized Training
11.0%
Explore Career Opportunities in Vocational/Technical Areas
7.3%
Improvement of Skills and Competencies in Present Job or Business
21.2%
Preparation for Employment in Occupational/Career Area
56.2%

FIGURE 1

An analysis of the enrollment patterns of occupational/career students revealed that two out of three students (63.0%) who enrolled as full-time students in the Fall 1974 term were still enrolled during the Fall 1975 term while 37.0% were not enrolled. Of the students who enrolled on a part-time basis in the Fall 1974 term, less than half (45.8%) were still enrolled during the Fall 1975 term while 54.2% were not enrolled. However, an anslysis of the reasons for discontinuing enrollment at a community college revealed that a majority of students either completed their objectives prior to withdrawing from college or withdrew from college only temporarily because of other responsibilities. Figure shows the reasons why occupational/career students withdrew from the community colleges. An analysis of withdrawal rates and reasons for withdrawal by original intent of students for enrolling at the community college revealed that students with short term objectives withdrew from college at a much higher rate than ones with longer term objectives. The reasons for withdrawing from college were significantly different for students with different original intents for enrolling at the college.

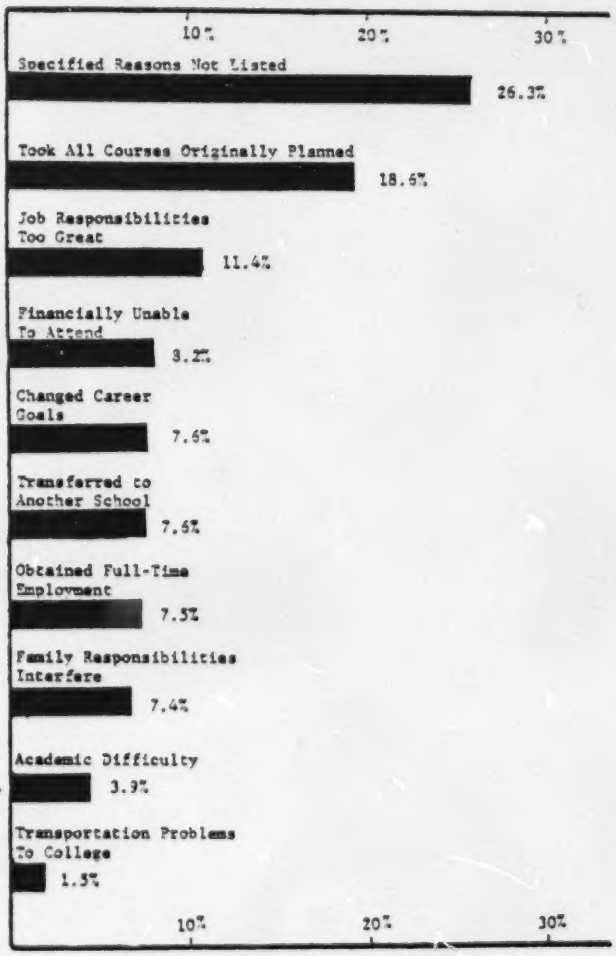

FIGURE 2

Students who graduated or terminated their education at the community college during each of the three years were surveyed the following year to find out their job placement rate, starting monthly salaries, job satisfaction, location of job, and educational status. In addition, these former students were asked to evaluate the instruction and services provided to them by the community college.

An analysis of the employment rates of former community college occupational/career students which are shown in Table 1 below revealed that a much lower percentage of former students were unemployed and seeking a job (3.6%) than the state average unemployment rate which was 7.1% for all ages during this period and substantially higher for the 18 to 24 age group. Full-time students and full-time homemakers make up the bulk of the former students who are unavailable for employment.

Table 1

Employment Status of Former Occupational/Career Students

Employment Status	Graduates	Non-Graduates	All Former Students
Employed	83.9%	76.3%	79.4%
Unavailable for Employment	12.4%	17.5%	15.4%
Unemployed but Not Seeking a Job	0.8%	2.2%	1.6%
Unemployed and Actively Seeking a Job	2.9%	4.0%	3.6%

A sizeable proportion of former community college occupational/career students chose to continue their education at institutions of postsecondary education after they completed their enrollment at the community college. The data in Table 2 below shows that 15.6% of both graduates and non-graduates were continuing their education on a full-time basis while an additional 8% of the graduates and 11.9% of the non-graduates were continuing their education on a part-time basis.

Table 2

Education Status of Former Community College Occupational/Career Students

Educational Status	Graduates	Non-Graduates	All Former Students
Full-Time	15.6%	15.6%	15.6%
Part-Time	8.0%	11.9%	10.2%
Total Students Continuing Education	23.6%	27.5%	25.8%

When asked how they found their present job, 55.4% of the former students said they found the job on their own, 19.1% continued in a prior job, 8.1% obtained assistance from college faculty and staff, 4.5% used an employment agency, 11% reported using other sources, while only 1.9% of the students credited the college placement office for finding their present job. Of particular significant in this analysis is the fact that nearly one out of five community college occupational students continued employment in a prior job. For these groups of students a gain in salary or advancement in their position resulting from the additional education might be the most appropriate analysis. It seems that a more detailed study on the use of college placement offices is needed to determine how much use is made of the placement offices by those students who reported finding a job primarily by another source.

An analysis of monthly salaries of former students who were employed revealed that former students who completed two to three years of education in an occupational program at a community college had a median monthly salary $216 higher than did students who completed one year or less. The data in Table 3 indicated that additional education in an occupational/career program at the community college means substantially extra salary income for individuals. Non-graduates reported slightly larger salaries than did graduates primarily because a larger proportion of non-graduates had prior jobs which they continued.

Table 3
Median Monthly Salaries of Former Students

	First Year	Second Year	Third Year	All Years Combined
Graduates	$459	$640	$749	$638
Non-Graduates	$621	$706	$845	$673
All Former Students	$569	$662	$785	$654

Former community college occupational/career students showed a high degree of satisfaction with their present job or position. The results of the follow-up showed that 82% of the graduates and 74% of the non-graduates reported they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their job or position while only 7% of the graduates and 11% of the non-graduates were dissatisfied with their job or position.

A unique feature of community college occupational/career former students revealed by this follow-up study is that a large majority locate jobs in the same community where they reside and go to college. The results showed that 67% of the former community college students took jobs in the community college district which they attended while only 5% of the students located a job out-of-state.

The follow-up results were analyzed by specific occupational/career programs to provide a comparison among programs and to provide statewide norms for use by local institutions for comparative purposes within a given program. Table 4 shows the results of this analysis for occupational/career graduates. The salaries shown are 1976-1977 monthly salaries and include both full-time and part-time employed graduates.

These obtained results indicate that occupational/career programs in the public community colleges of Illinois are very effectively meeting the needs of a wide variety of students. Since two-thirds of the former students take jobs within the community in which the college is located, occupational/career programs also have a very great positive economic impact on the local economy of the community college district and provide a well-trained pool of employees which are a great benefit to the industries and business enterprises located within that community.

A review of the original objectives of this statewide follow-up study shows that most of the objectives of the study were met. The study has provided much statewide data about former occupational/career students which is useful for state purposes as well as for comparative analysis for local community colleges. An important objective of the study was to assist local community colleges in establishing their own occupational follow-up studies. This statewide study provided the first experience of conducting an occupational follow-up study for many community colleges in Illinois. Many community colleges took advantage of the assistance provided through the statewide study to develop viable occupational follow-up studies at their local institutions. Hopefully, the community colleges in Illinois will continue to further develop their efforts in this area and to make more use of the occupational follow-up study information at their own institutions.

Table 4

FOLLOW-UP DATA OF OCCUPATIONAL/CAREER GRADUATES* BY PROGRAM AREA

OE CODE	OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAM	NUMBER RESPONDING	PERCENT EMPLOYED	MEDIAN MONTHLY SALARY **	SATISFIED OR VERY SATISFIED WITH PRESENT JOB	LOCATION OF JOB		
						IN DISTRICT	OUT-OF DISTRICT	OUT-OF STATE
01.01	Agricultural Prod.	66	95%	$ 748	92%	74%	23%	3%
01.02	Agricultural Supply	56	71	801	92	80	15	5
01.03	Agricultural Mechanics	49	94	674	88	57	41	2
01.05	Ornamental Horticulture	35	86	584	66	60	30	10
01.06	Agricultural Resources	15	67	626	60	40	60	--
04.07	Food Services	9	67	701	83	33	67	--
04.08	General Merchandise	22	83	651	63	75	19	6
04.11	Hotel and Lodging	7	100	651	43	50	50	--
04.17	Real Estate	12	100	1001	83	83	17	--
04.20	Retail Trade	17	76	801	100	79	21	--
04.99	Other Distributive Educ.	20	65	701	77	77	23	--
07.0101	Dental Assisting	23	87	468	82	59	32	9
07.0102	Dental Hygiene	22	91	1051	95	40	45	15
07.0103	Dental Laboratory Tech.	6	100	651	--	--	50	50
07.02	Medical Laboratory Tech.	21	86	737	85	82	6	12
07.0301	Nursing (Assoc. Degree)	152	89	807	81	66	30	4
07.0302	Practical Nursing	123	80	565	92	72	23	5
07.0305	Surgical Technician	10	70	621	88	25	63	12
07.04	Rehabilitation Aide	17	82	589	85	54	38	8
07.05	Radiologic Technician	27	96	834	82	59	33	8
07.0904	Medical Assisting	9	89	621	86	63	12	25
07.0908	Food Service Supervisor	7	86	651	50	33	67	--
07.0913	Medical Records	8	100	601	88	25	12	63
09.02	Home Economist Assisting	92	73	444	83	60	37	3
14.01	Accounting & Comput. Occ.	114	82	633	72	78	17	5
14.0200	Business Data Process.	56	93	734	81	68	25	7
14.0203	Computer Programming	53	81	851	82	57	41	2
14.03	General Office Occup.	24	58	458	92	77	23	--
14.04	Infor. Communicat. Occ.	12	67	601	100	44	44	12
14.06	Personnel Train. Tech.	22	55	301	82	73	--	27
14.07	Stenographic Occup.	199	83	574	81	73	19	8
14.08	Administrative Mgmt.	54	76	976	65	42	51	7
14.09	Typing Occupations	18	56	376	82	86	14	--
16.0103	Architectural Tech.	26	62	668	83	85	15	--
16.0104	Automotive Tech.	18	100	701	83	67	22	11
16.0108	Electronic Tech.	63	81	947	77	45	39	16
16.0113	Mechanical Tech.	41	90	923	70	82	15	3
16.0116	Petroleum Tech.	6	100	601	50	50	33	17
16.06	Coal Mining Tech.	79	72	864	82	49	47	4
16.99	Occup. Health & Saf. Tech.	9	100	701	75	75	25	--
17.01	Air Conditioning	24	96	751	84	65	35	--
17.03	Automotive Services	35	91	768	87	67	33	--
17.04	Aviation Occup.	8	75	731	100	20	20	60
17.07	Commercial Art	26	92	526	78	61	35	4
17.13	Drafting	13	77	726	75	45	45	10
17.15	Electronic Service	9	78	726	43	100	--	--
17.2302	Machine Shop	11	82	851	75	63	12	25
17.2306	Welding	11	82	634	33	67	22	11
17.26	Personal Svc. & Occup.	20	80	426	84	84	11	5
17.2801	Fire Prevent. & Control	13	92	1301	91	73	27	--
17.2802	Law Enforcement	75	77	739	77	59	38	3
17.33	Textile Production	15	80	368	46	18	73	9
17.37	Coal Mining	11	100%	$ 1134	100%	82%	--	18%
	All Other Programs ***	120	90%	$ 676	77%	75%	22%	3%
	All Graduates Responding	2010	80%	$ 638	82%	67%	28%	5%

* Study included only students who initially enrolled at an Illinois public community college during Fall 1974.

** Salaries reported are 1975, 1976, and 1977 median monthly salaries reported six to nine months after the student graduated from the program and include salaries of students employed on a part-time basis.

*** Includes programs with less than five respondents and unreported O.E. Codes.